

The President's News Conference

March 31, 1982

The President I have a statement which I shall read for the sound media that I know has been distributed.

Nuclear Arms Reductions

Twice in my lifetime I've seen the world plunged blindly into global wars that inflicted untold suffering upon millions of innocent people. I share the determination of today's young people that such a tragedy, which would be rendered even more terrible by the monstrous inhumane weapons in the world's nuclear arsenals, must never happen again. My goal is to reduce nuclear weapons dramatically, assuring lasting peace and security.

Last November, I stressed our commitment to negotiate in good faith for the reduction of both nuclear and conventional weapons. I made a specific proposal to eliminate entirely the intermediate-range missiles. We remain committed to those goals.

In Geneva we've proposed a treaty with the Soviet Union which embodies our proposals. In Vienna, along with our allies, we're negotiating reductions of conventional forces in Europe. And here in Washington, we're completing preparations for talks with the Soviets on strategic weapons reductions.

We know all too well from past experience that negotiations with the Soviet

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Nuclear Warfare

Q. Mr. President, do you think that a nuclear war would be winnable or even survivable and under what conditions?

The President. I just have to say that I don't think there could be any winners. Everybody would be a loser if there's a nuclear war.

Yes, Larry [Laurence Barrett, Time, Inc.].

U.S.-Soviet Relations

Q. Mr. President, Leonid Brezhnev the other day implied that if the U.S. went ahead with the Pershing II missiles—that the ground-launched cruise missiles—that he would take some kind of retaliatory step. Did you interpret this as a threat? And if so, how are you responding to him in private, or how do you plan to respond to him?

The President. Well, I know that we're looking at all these various statements and so forth and analyzing them to see what they may mean. Frankly, I myself am inclined to believe that this is just part of the dialog that goes on and part of a kind of a propaganda campaign that is aimed at making them look like the peacemakers and as if we're the seekers of war. And that is completely contrary to fact.

Q. But, sir, he's implying—if I may follow up—that he would perhaps install nuclear weapons in this hemisphere. If that's the case, how would you respond?

The President. The only place that he could install them in this hemisphere would be in Cuba, which is his satellite now, although they're working up to where it might be Nicaragua—also considered that. But this would be in total violation, even though there have been other things we think are violations also in the 1962 agreement, at the time of the missile crisis. And then there are options open to us that I would prefer not to discuss, because, as you know, I don't like to discuss the things that we could or might or might not do.

Judy [Judy Woodruff, NBC News]?